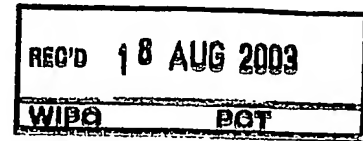




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Patentanmeldung Nr. Patent application No. Demande de brevet n°

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Bezeichnung der Erfindung/Title of the invention/Titre de l'invention:
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Disc drive apparatus

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Disc drive apparatus

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(43)

The present invention relates in general to a disc drive apparatus for writing/reading information into/from an optical storage disc; hereinafter, such disc drive apparatus will also be indicated as "optical disc drive".

As is commonly known, an optical storage disc comprises at least one track, either in the form of a continuous spiral or in the form of multiple concentric circles, of storage space where information may be stored. Optical discs may be read-only type, where information is recorded during manufacture, which data can only be read by a user. The optical storage disc may also be a writable type, where information may be stored by a user. For writing information in the storage space of the optical storage disc, or for reading information from the disc, an optical disc drive comprises, on the one hand, means for receiving and rotating an optical disc, and on the other hand a displaceable optical head for scanning the storage track with an optical beam, typically a laser beam. Since the technology of optical discs in general, the way in which information can be stored in an optical disc, and the way in which optical data can be read from an optical disc, is commonly known, it is not necessary here to describe this technology in more detail.

For receiving the optical disc, an optical disc drive usually comprises a carrier tray which is displaceable between a receiving position where the tray is located outside a disc drive housing so that a user can place a disc, and a scanning position where the disc is located inside said disc drive housing and can be rotated by the rotating means and accessed by the optical head.

For optically scanning the rotating disc, at least an objective lens of the optical head is fitted in a lens holder which is mounted on a sledge which is movable in the radial direction of the optical disc. The sledge can be of a linear type, which follows a straight line of displacement, or of a pivoting type, which follows a curved line of displacement.

For rotating the optical disc, an optical disc drive comprises a motor-driven hub which comprises an upper hub section and a lower hub section, the two hub sections being axially aligned and being movable towards each other in order to clamp a central portion of the optical disc between them. Usually, one hub section is fixed while the other

hub section is axially movable. Usually, the movable hub section is arranged directly on the spindle axle of a spindle motor.

It is important that the optical disc is well-aligned with the drive spindle motor. In order to facilitate this alignment, optical discs comprise an axially centred hole, and at least one of said drive hub sections comprises a tapered extension, arranged axially centred on the hub surface facing the disc, fitting into said hole.

Optical discs and optical disc drives are standardised. This does not only apply to the coding protocols, but also to the dimensions of certain parts. For instance, a CD disc or DVD disc has an outer diameter of 12 cm, and its central hole has a diameter of 15 mm. The hub sections typically have a diameter in the order of about 25 mm. Also, the lens holder and sledge have a certain physical size. This all adds up to the fact that a radially inner portion of an optical disc can not be accessed by the disc drive optics; typically, this inaccessible inner portion of an optical disc has a diameter in the order of about 40 mm.

A recent development regards a disc having smaller dimensions, typically having an outer diameter in the order of about 30 mm. In the context of the present invention, such disc will hereinafter be indicated as "small disc", in contrast to the larger-sized conventional discs, which will hereinafter be indicated as "large disc". Disc drives for such small discs, hereinafter indicated as "small drive", will be much smaller than conventional disc drives, hereinafter indicated as "large drive", and may typically find application in small, handheld equipment such as for instance mobile telephones, personal digital assistants, etc. Small drives may be designed as miniaturized version of large drives, or according to a complete new concept, and one or more new standards may develop.

It is highly desirable that small discs can also be handled by large drives. For instance, this will allow a user to read/write such disc using his PC or disc-type video recorder. In order to allow for this feature, two important conditions must be met. First, the small discs should be backwards compatible with large drives; in other words, the format used for writing small discs should be (almost) the same as the format used for writing large discs, so that a large drive "understands" what is written by a small drive and vice versa. Second, the large drives should physically be capable of accessing the small discs.

The present invention specifically relates to this second condition. As explained above, large disc drives are not expected to access track diameters smaller than 40 mm, whereas small discs have an outer diameter of 30 mm. Thus, it should be clear that it is not possible to simply handle a small disc by the rotating means and scanning for handling large discs.

It is a general objective of the present invention to solve this problem.

More particularly, it is an objective of the present invention to provide a disc drive physically capable of accessing large discs as well as small discs.

According to an important aspect of the present invention, a disc drive
5 comprises first rotating means adapted for rotating large discs and second rotating means adapted for rotating small discs.

EP-A-0.275.600 describes a disc drive suitable for scanning discs of different types, i.e. audio discs and video discs, where the rotating means comprise a first motor-driven
10 turntable, for rotating first type discs, and a second turntable which is movable and can be placed on the first turntable, for rotating second type discs. This approach may offer a solution for the problem of holding different type discs, but is not suitable for solving the problem underlying the present invention, because the tracks of the small discs are still in a disc zone inaccessible to the optics of the disc drive.

15 US-A-4.575.836 describes a disc drive suitable for scanning discs of different types, i.e. audio discs and video discs, where the rotating means comprise a first rotary driver for rotating first type discs, and a second rotary driver for rotating second type discs. The first rotary driver comprises a set of a first turntable and a first drive motor. The second rotary driver comprises a set of a second turntable and a second drive motor. The first rotary driver
20 and the second rotary driver are mounted on a movable holder, which is movable to selectively bring either the first rotary driver or the second rotary driver to a play position, wherein the play position of the second rotary driver is identical to the play position of the first rotary driver. If the first rotary driver is in the play position, the first turntable is ready to receive video discs. If the second rotary driver is in the play position, the second turntable is
25 ready to receive audio discs. Moving the holder is effected by a separate turning motor through a reduction gear.

All in all, the mechanism of this prior art disc drive is bulky, complicated and expensive, and leads to an increase in weight of the disc drive.

Further, the approach taken by this publication is not suitable for solving the
30 problem underlying the present invention. In fact, where the present invention is related to the problem of playing a large disc and a small disc, the publication addresses the problem of playing a large disc (audio disc; 12 cm) and an even larger disc (video disc; 20-30 cm). In both play situations, the size of the turntable combined with the size of the pickup results in an inaccessible disc zone larger than the size of the small discs (3 cm).

US-A-4.796.251 also describes a disc drive suitable for scanning discs of different types, i.e. audio discs and video discs. Similar to US-A-4.575.836, the rotating means comprise a first rotary driver for rotating first type discs, and a second rotary driver for rotating second type discs. The first rotary driver comprises a set of a first turntable and a first drive motor. The second rotary driver comprises a set of a second turntable and a second drive motor. The first rotary driver is fixed, and is always in its play position. The second rotary driver is movable between a rest position and a play position, which differs from the play position of the first rotary driver. If the disc drive is to play video discs, the second rotary driver is rotated to its rest position, which is a position such that the second turntable does not hinder the operation of the scanning means. If the disc drive is to play audio discs, the second rotary driver is rotated to its play position, wherein the second turntable is ready to receive audio discs. The play position of the second rotary driver is such that an audio disc will not touch the first turntable. Moving the second rotary driver is effected by a separate motor through a reduction gear.

All in all, the mechanism of this prior art disc drive is also rather bulky, complicated and expensive, and leads to an increase in weight of the disc drive, although to a lesser extent than US-A-4.575.836.

Further, similar to US-A-4.575.836, the approach taken by this publication is not suitable for solving the problem underlying the present invention. Again, where the present invention is related to the problem of playing a large disc (12 cm) and a small disc (3 cm), the publication addresses the problem of playing a large disc (audio disc; 12 cm) and an even larger disc (video disc; 20-30 cm). In both play situations, the size of the turntable combined with the size of the pickup results in an inaccessible disc zone larger than the size of the small discs (3 cm).

The present invention is based on the insight, that the prior art disc drives which are capable of handling discs of different sizes all suffer from a common problem, i.e. the fact that the movable optics sledge and the one or more turntables are always located on the same side of the disc. Therefore, the movable sledge will always meet the turntable and is never able to access tracks having a diameter smaller than (approximately) 40 mm.

Based on this insight, the present invention overcomes the above-identified problem by providing a disc drive comprising disc rotating means having clamping components arranged on one side of the disc only, opposite to the movable optics sledge.

Then, the optical sledge is free to access all disc surface parts from radius=0 to the outer radius, as it will not meet any component of the disc rotating means.

These and other aspects, features and advantages of the present invention will be further explained by the following description of an optical disc drive according to the present invention with reference to the drawings, in which same reference numerals indicate same or similar parts, and in which:

Figure 1 is a perspective view schematically illustrating a disc drive apparatus;

Figures 2A-C are schematical cross-sections of an embodiment of the disc drive apparatus according to the present invention, illustrating subsequent steps in a loading operation of a large disc;

Figures 3A-C are similar schematical cross-sections, illustrating subsequent steps in a loading operation of a small disc;

Figure 4 schematically illustrates a micromotor for a small disc.

Figure 1 is a perspective view schematically illustrating a disc drive apparatus 1 comprising a housing 2 with a front panel 3. Usually, and as shown, the front panel 3 has a rectangular shape with a horizontal dimension larger than a vertical dimension, but this is not essential. For sake of convenience, the horizontal direction will hereinafter be indicated as X-direction, while the vertical direction will hereinafter be indicated as Z-direction. In the front panel 3, an opening 4 is formed, likewise having a rectangular shape although this is not essential, which opening 4 can be closed by a lid 5. Control buttons for operating the disc drive apparatus 1 are not shown for sake of simplicity.

The disc drive apparatus 1 further comprises a drawer-type carrier tray 10, which is displaceable in the Y-direction perpendicular to said X and Z directions. In a first extreme position, illustrated in figure 1, the lid 5 is opened and the carrier tray 10 partly extends through the opening 4. In this position, a user can place a disc on the carrier tray 10. This first extreme position will hereinafter also be indicated as loading position.

In a second extreme position, not illustrated in figure 1, the carrier tray 10 is withdrawn to a location inside the housing 2, and the lid 5 is closed. In this position, a disc placed on the carrier tray 10 can be played (i.e. read or written). This second extreme position will hereinafter also be indicated as play position.

It is noted that such drawer-type carrier tray 10 is known per se for a disc drive, as are means for guiding and means for driving the Y-movement of the carrier tray 10,

while further such guiding means and driving means are not subject of the present invention and knowledge on their design and operation are not necessary for understanding the present invention. Therefore, such guiding means and driving means are not shown and will not be discussed in detail.

5 In a top surface 11 of the carrier tray 10, a first reception space 12 is formed as a recession with, in this case, a partly circular periphery 12a and a bottom 12b, for receiving a large disc (not shown). Similarly, a second reception space 13 is formed as a recession with, in this case, a partly circular periphery 13a and a bottom 13b, for receiving a small disc (not shown). The centre of the first circular reception space 12 is indicated at 12c, and the centre
10 of the second circular reception space 13 is indicated at 13c. The two reception spaces 12 and 13 are aligned in the Y-direction, i.e. the centres 12c and 13c are located on a common line 15 parallel to the Y-direction.

Further, an opening 14 is formed in the carrier tray 10, having a sufficient
15 extent in the Y-direction and X-direction and at least extending from the first centre 12c through the second centre 13c to the first periphery 12a, to allow rotating means and scanning means access to a disc placed on the carrier tray 10, as will be explained in more detail in the following.

Figures 2A-C are schematical cross-sections of the disc drive apparatus 1 according to said line 15, schematically showing portions of some components of the disc
20 drive apparatus 1. For sake of simplicity, components which can be identical to prior art components, which are not necessary for understanding the present invention, and/or which are obvious to a person skilled in the art are not shown in these figures.

A part of a frame of the disc drive apparatus 1 is shown at 20. The disc drive apparatus 1 further comprises a subframe 21, which is pivotably coupled to the frame 20 with
25 respect to a horizontal pivot axis 22, which is directed parallel to the X-direction in this example.

The disc drive apparatus 1 comprises a first rotary drive device 30 for driving large discs. The first rotary drive device 30 comprises a spindle motor 31 with a spindle axle 32 and a motor hub 33 mounted on the spindle axle 32. The spindle motor 31 is mounted on
30 said subframe 21. The first rotary drive device 30 further comprises a fixed hub 34 which is mounted fixedly (although with rotary freedom) to the apparatus frame 20. The motor hub 33 has a front face 33a and a tapered hill 33b projecting therefrom. The fixed hub 34 has a front face 34a and a tapered recession 34b. A first rotation axis of the first rotary drive device 30 is indicated at 35.

It is noted that this rotation axis 35 extends according to the Z-direction. In the following, indications as "above" and "below" will be used with reference to the Z-direction, assuming that the apparatus is placed in its normal operating position as illustrated in figure 1.

5 The fixed hub 34 is mounted above a path followed by the movable carrier tray 10, and the subframe 21 with the spindle motor 31 and the motor hub 33 is mounted below said path. Figure 2A illustrates a loading state of the disc drive apparatus 1, in which state the movable carrier tray 10 is in its loading position as illustrated in figure 1, i.e. extending outside the housing 2. In this loading state, the subframe 21 has been pivoted
10 downwards over a sufficient angle α , to allow the movable carrier tray 10 undisturbed passage between the motor hub 33 and the fixed hub 34.

 Figure 2A illustrates a large disc 100 placed in the first reception space 12 of the carrier tray 10. The disc 100 is shown resting on the bottom 12b of the first reception space 12. A central hole of the disc 100 is indicated at 101. Since the periphery 12a of the
15 first reception space 12 corresponds to the outer diameter of the disc 100 (although with sufficient play), the central hole 101 of the disc 100 is substantially aligned with said centre 12c of the first circular reception space 12. A top surface 102 may be provided with a label for identification. The bottom side 103 involves the side where information has been or can be recorded, and which is illuminated by a laser beam on recording or read-out.

20 In response to an appropriate user command, the carrier tray 10 is drawn into the housing 2 towards its play position. In its travel from its loading position to its play position, the carrier tray 10 is not disturbed by the motor hub 33 and the fixed hub 34, as mentioned. Figure 2B shows the carrier tray 10 having reached its play position. In this position, the centre 12c of the first circular reception space 12, and hence the central hole 101
25 of the disc 100, are substantially aligned with said first rotation axis 35.

 Subsequently, the subframe 21 is pivoted upwards in order to have the first rotary drive device 30 engage with the disc 100. Caused by the upwards movement of the subframe 21, the tapered hill 33b of the motor hub 33 enters the central hole 101 of the disc 100, thus centring the disc 100, and enters the tapered recession 34b of the fixed hub 34. The
30 front face 33a of the motor hub 33 lifts the disc 100 from the bottom 12b of the first reception space 12. Finally, an annular central portion of the disc 100 is firmly clamped between the front face 33a of the motor hub 33 and the front face 34a of the fixed hub 34. If the spindle motor 31 is energized now, the disc 100 will rotate with this motor.

The subframe 21 also carries a sledge 41 of optical scanning means 40, which further comprises an optical lens 42 mounted in a lens holder 43. The sledge 41 can be moved along the subframe 21 in a direction parallel to the Y-direction, so that the optical lens 42 can be displaced radially with respect to the disc 100. As shown in figure 2B, the optical lens 42 does not hinder the disc 100 when the subframe 21 is in its lower position. As shown in figure 2C, the optical lens 42 is close to the lower surface 103 of the disc 100 when the subframe 21 is in its upper position. The large disc 100 can now be scanned for recording or read-out, as usual.

It is noted that such displaceable sledge is known per se for a disc drive, as are means for guiding and means for driving the Y-movement of the sledge, while further such guiding means and driving means are not subject of the present invention and knowledge on their design and operation are not necessary for understanding the present invention. Therefore, such guiding means and driving means are not shown and will not be discussed in detail.

Further, it is noted that the sledge can be moved between a first extreme position corresponding to the outer diameter of the large disc 100 (to the left-hand side in figure 2C), and a second extreme position which is defined by a stop (not shown), which stop is arranged such that the sledge will not touch the motor 31 nor the motor hub 33a. Thus, as will be clear to a person skilled in the art, the size of the motor 31 and the motor hub 33a in combination with the size of the sledge 41 defines an inaccessible portion of the disc 100. In the following, the travel path between said two extreme positions will be indicated as "radial range".

If the write or read operation is completed and the disc 100 is to be ejected from the apparatus, the above-mentioned steps are repeated in reverse order. The subframe 21 is lowered, so that the motor hub 33 lowers the disc 100 until it rests again on the tray 10. The subframe 21 is lowered further, and the tray 10 is moved in the Y-direction towards its loading position illustrated in figure 2A. The user can now take the disc from the tray.

As also shown in figures 2A-C, and as explained in more detail with reference to figures 3A-C, disc drive apparatus 1 further comprises a second rotary drive device 50 for driving small discs. The second rotary drive device 50 comprises a second motor 51 with a motor hub 53, the second motor 51 being mounted on said frame 20. A second rotation axis of the second rotary drive device 50 is indicated at 55. As clearly shown in figures 2A-C and 3A-C, the second rotation axis 55 is at a distance from the first rotation axis 35 of the first rotary drive device 30.

The second motor 51 may be implemented as a spindle motor, like the first motor 31 mounted on the spindle axle 32. In order to save space, the second motor 51 preferably only has a very small axial extent. Normally, in a disc drive housing, there is not much space above the disc.

5 Figure 4 illustrates the second motor 51 on a larger scale, together with a small disc 200 having a central hole 201. A top surface 202 may be provided with a label for identification. The bottom side 203 involves the side where information has been or can be recorded, and which is illuminated by a laser beam on recording or read-out.

10 The second motor hub 53 has a front face 53a and a centring part 53b projecting therefrom, which may have a tapered edge (not shown). The centring part 53b has an outer diameter corresponding to the inner diameter of the central hole 201 of the small disc 200.

15 According to an important aspect of the present invention, the second motor hub 53 is adapted to completely independently hold the small disc 200, i.e. without the need of additional clamping means such as a counter hub as used in the first rotary drive device 30. In a preferred embodiment, the second motor hub 53 is at least partly magnetic, for instance by comprising a magnetic material or by comprising an electromagnet. Further, in this preferred embodiment, the small disc 200 is provided with an annular disc hub 210 around the said hole 201, which is magnetically attractable, for instance by at least partly comprising
20 a magnetic material or a magnetizable material.

When the small disc 200 is held by the second motor hub 53, a top surface 212 of the annular disc hub 210 contacts the front face 53a of the second motor hub 53, and the centring part 53b of the second motor hub 53 reaches into the central hole 201 of the disc 200. Preferably, the centring part 53b of the second motor hub 53 does not extend beyond a
25 bottom surface 213 of the annular disc hub 210, i.e. the axial dimension of the centring part 53b of the second motor hub 53 is smaller than the axial dimension of the disc hub 210.

The top surface 212 of the disc hub 210 may be flush with the top surface 202 of the disc 200. However, in order to reduce the overall axial size as much as possible, the top surface 212 of the disc hub 210 preferably is recessed below the top surface 202 of the
30 disc 200 over a small distance d1.

Preferably, the bottom surface 213 of the disc hub 210 does not project below the bottom surface 203 of the disc 200. In other words, the bottom surface 213 of the disc hub 210 preferably is flush with the bottom surface 203 of the disc 200, or is slightly recessed from the bottom surface 203 of the disc 200 over a small distance d2. However, it may be

acceptable if the bottom surface 213 of the disc hub 210 slightly projects below the bottom surface 203 of the disc 200 over a small distance, as long as this distance is smaller than the operational distance between the bottom surface 203 of the disc 200 and any component of the optics system 40.

5 Preferably, the disc hub 210 is symmetric so that the first distance d1 equals the second distance d2. Then, the small disc 200 is also usable in an apparatus wherein a magnetic motor hub holds the disc hub 210 at its bottom surface 213.

10 When the motor hub 53 is rotated by the motor 51, the small disc 200 is caused to rotate by the frictional force exerted on the top disc hub surface 212 by the front face 53a of the motor hub 53. Normally, this frictional force is sufficient to rotate the disc 200 in a reliable manner. However, it is also possible to provide for a form-lock between said surfaces, if desired, for instance by providing small grooves and/or ridges on any or both of said surfaces.

15 With reference to figures 2A-C it is noted that the second motor 51 is mounted above said path followed by the movable carrier tray 10, at such a location that the carrier tray 10, in its travel from its loading position to its play position, is not disturbed by this second motor. Neither is the large disc 100 disturbed by this second motor when the large disc 100 is brought to its play position.

20 The operation of the disc drive apparatus 1 as regards small discs 200 will now be explained in more detail with reference to figures 3A-C.

25 Similar to figure 2A, figure 3A illustrates the loading state of the disc drive apparatus 1. The subframe 21 is in its downwards pivoted position. In contrast to figure 2A, figure 3A illustrates a small disc 200 placed in the second reception space 13 of the carrier tray 10. The disc 200 is shown resting on the bottom 13b of the second reception space 13. Since the periphery 13a of the second reception space 13 corresponds to the outer diameter of the disc 200 (although with sufficient play), the central hole 201 of the disc 200 is substantially aligned with said centre 13c of the second circular reception space 13.

30 In response to an appropriate user command, the carrier tray 10 is drawn into the housing 2 towards its play position. In its travel from its loading position to its play position, the carrier tray 10 is not disturbed by the motor hub 33 and the fixed hub 34, as mentioned. Also, the small disc 200 resting on the bottom 13b of the second reception space 13 is not disturbed by the fixed hub 34 of the first rotary drive device 30. Figure 3B shows the carrier tray 10 having reached its play position. In this position, the centre 13c of the

second circular reception space 13, and hence the central hole 201 of the small disc 200, are substantially aligned with said second rotation axis 55 of the second rotary drive device 50.

The small disc 200 is now picked up by the second motor hub 53. For this purpose, the disc drive apparatus 1 is provided with a mechanism adapted to bring the small disc 200 and the second motor hub 53 together. In the embodiment illustrated in figures 3A-C, the second motor 51 is mounted axially displaceable with respect to the frame 20, and said mechanism comprises means for axially displacing the second motor 51, or at least its hub 53, downwards towards the small disc 200 resting on the bottom 13b of the second reception space 13, until the annular disc hub 210 of the small disc 200 is magnetically attracted against the motor hub 53. This position of the second motor 51 will be indicated as pick-up position. Then, the second motor 51 is lifted again towards its rest position, lifting the disc 200 from the bottom 13b of the second circular reception space 13. Figure 3B shows the second motor 51 holding the disc 200 at a position between said pick-up position and said rest position.

Subsequently, the subframe 21 is pivoted upwards, as explained above with reference to figures 2A-C, thus lifting the sledge 41 to its scanning position. As illustrated in figure 3C, the optical lens 42 of optical scanning means 40 is now close to the lower surface 203 of the small disc 200, and the small disc 200 can now be scanned for recording or read-out.

In this respect it is noted that, during such scanning, a large disc 100 is held in a first play position (figure 2C) whereas a small disc 200 is held in a second play position (figure 3C) which is different from the first play position. Each play position can be defined in terms of a rotation axis and a play plane, which is an imaginary plane coinciding with the bottom surface 103, 203 of the corresponding disc 100, 200 when it is in its play position. Now, the second rotation axis 55 of the second play position is displaced with respect to the first rotation axis 35 of the first play position. However, the second play plane of the second play position substantially coincides with the first play plane of the first play position. It is not necessary that the second play plane exactly coincides with the first play plane, as small deviations can easily be overcome by the axial servo system of the optical system 40. In any case, the small disc 200 can be scanned by the optical system 40 without any modification to the optical system 40 being necessary. As far as the optical system 40 is concerned, it does not matter whether a large disc 100 or a small disc 200 is loaded: it just sees an optical record layer.

According to an important feature of the present invention, the second motor 51 is located opposite the sledge 41. In other words, with respect to the small disc 200 in its play position (figure 3C), the second motor 51 and the sledge 41 are located on opposite sides of the disc 200, the sledge 41 facing the lower disc surface 203 which is to be irradiated with the scan beam, and the second hub 53 of the second motor 51 facing the upper disc surface 202 which may carry a label. This in contrast to the first motor 31 of the first rotary drive device 30, which is located adjacent the sledge 41, i.e. on the same side of the disc 100. According to a further important feature of the present invention, the second rotary drive device 50 is free from additional clamping members on the side of the lower disc surface 203, which might obstruct the sledge 41. Thanks to these inventive features, the entire lower disc surface 203 is accessible for the optical scanning means 40. It is further noted that the radial range of the sledge 41 fully covers the range between second rotation axis 55 and the outer periphery of the small disc 200.

Thus, the present invention succeeds in providing a disc drive apparatus capable of reading/writing discs of different sizes. This disc drive apparatus comprises a first rotary drive device 30 for holding and rotating a first type disc 100 in a first play position, and scanning means 40 for scanning a surface 103 of the rotating first type disc 100 in its play position. The disc drive apparatus 1 further comprises a second rotary drive device 50, arranged opposite the scanning means 40, for holding and rotating a second type disc 200 in a second play position. Said scanning means 40 are also capable of scanning a surface 203 of the rotating second type disc 200 in its play position.

It should be clear to a person skilled in the art that the present invention is not limited to the exemplary embodiments discussed above, but that various variations and modifications are possible within the protective scope of the invention as defined in the appending claims.

For instance, although the invention has been described and explained in the context of optical discs, the principles of the present invention are also applicable in the context of different storage types, for instance magnetic discs.

Further, although the invention has been described and explained for an apparatus where the sledge 41 is mounted on a pivotable subframe 20 below the play positions of the discs and the second motor 51 is mounted to a frame above the play positions of the discs, it is also possible that the pivotable subframe 20 is arranged above the play positions of the discs, while it is also possible that the sledge 41 is mounted to the fixed frame whereas the second motor 51 is mounted on the pivoting subframe.

It is noted that in principle it is possible to change the orientation of the first rotary drive device 30, such that the motor is located above the disc whereas the fixed hub is located below the disc. However, in that case the problem addressed by the present invention remains, in that the hub is in the way and prevents access to the small disc. Further, the
5 solution proposed by the present invention still applies.

Further, it is noted that, in case a large disc is loaded, an axial displacement of the second motor should be avoided since such might damage the disc. Therefore, an axial displacement drive system for the second motor may be provided with a sensor for detecting the presence of a large disc, for instance an optical sensor, which may generate a
10 displacement inhibiting signal when a large disc is detected.

CLAIMS:

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1. Disc drive apparatus capable of reading/writing discs of different sizes, comprising:

a first rotary drive device for holding and rotating a first type disc in a first play position;

5 a second rotary drive device for holding and rotating a second type disc in a second play position;

scanning means for scanning a surface of a rotating disc in its play position; wherein the second rotary drive device is arranged opposite the scanning means.

10 2. Disc drive apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said first rotary drive device defines a first rotation axis, and wherein said second rotary drive device defines a second rotation axis which is located at a distance from the first rotation axis of the first rotary drive device.

15 3. Disc drive apparatus according to any of the previous claims, wherein said second rotary drive device comprises a second motor drivingly engaging a second motor hub, said second motor hub being adapted to completely independently hold a disc.

20 4. Disc drive apparatus according to claim 3, wherein said second motor hub is at least partly magnetic, for instance by comprising a magnetic material or by comprising an electromagnet.

25 5. Disc drive apparatus according to claim 3 or 4, wherein, in operation, a front face of said second motor hub contacts an upper surface of said disc, said second rotary drive device being free from additional clamping members on the side of the opposite lower disc surface.

6. Disc drive apparatus according to any of the previous claims 3-5, wherein at least said second motor hub is axially displaceable between a rest position and a pickup position.

5 7. Disc drive apparatus according to any of the previous claims 3-6, wherein said second motor hub has a front face and a centring part projecting therefrom, said centring part having an outer diameter corresponding to the inner diameter of the central hole of a small disc, and said centring part preferably having an axial dimension smaller than an axial dimension of a disc hub.

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8. Disc drive apparatus according to any of the previous claims, wherein said scanning means comprise a sledge displaceably mounted on a subframe which is pivotably connected to a frame with respect to a horizontal pivot axis.

15 9. Disc drive apparatus according to claim 8, wherein said first rotary drive device comprises at least one hub mounted on said subframe.

10. Disc drive apparatus according to claim 9, wherein said first rotary drive device further comprises a spindle motor mounted on said subframe and a second hub
20 mounted on said frame, the first hub being mounted on a spindle of said spindle motor.

11. Disc drive apparatus according to any of the previous claims, further comprising a loading mechanism adapted to receive a disc in a loading position and bringing the disc to a play position, said loading mechanism comprising a carrier tray capable of
25 reciprocating between a loading position where the tray is located outside a disc drive housing and a play position where the tray is located inside said disc drive housing.

12. Disc drive apparatus according to claim 11, wherein said carrier tray comprises a first reception space formed as a recession in a top surface of the carrier tray,
30 having a first centre;

wherein said carrier tray further comprises a second reception space formed as a recession in said top surface, having a second centre, the second reception space having a diameter smaller than the diameter of the first reception space;

wherein said carrier tray further has an opening at least coinciding with said first centre and said second centre.

13. Disc drive apparatus according to any of claims 11-12, wherein said carrier
5 tray is arranged below said second rotary drive device and above said scanning means.

14. Disc drive apparatus according to any of the previous claims, adapted to execute the following steps in a disc loading operation:

- a first step of receiving a disc on a carrier tray;
- 10 – a second step of displacing the carrier tray to bring the disc to a play position aligned with the second rotary drive device;
- a third step of picking up said disc by a motor hub of said second rotary drive device;
- a fourth step of lifting said disc from said carrier tray;
- a fifth step of raising said scanning means towards said disc.

15. Disc drive apparatus according to claim 14, wherein said third step comprises the step of axially lowering at least said motor hub towards said disc lying on said carrier tray;

and wherein said fourth step comprises the step of axially raising at least said
20 motor hub holding said disc.

16. Disc drive apparatus according to claim 15, wherein said third step comprises the step of magnetically attracting said disc against a front face of said motor hub.

25 17. Record disc provided with an annular disc hub which is magnetically attractable, the disc having a first main surface for facing a write/read pickup and a second main surface opposite said first main surface for facing a front face of a motor hub of a disc drive apparatus according to any of claims 1-16;

wherein said annular disc hub has a top surface which is flush with said
30 second main surface of the disc or, preferably, which is slightly recessed below said second main surface of the disc over a small distance.

18. Record disc according to claim 17, wherein said annular disc hub has a bottom surface which is flush with said first main surface of the disc or, preferably, which is slightly recessed from said first main surface of the disc over a small distance;

said annular disc hub preferably being symmetric so that both distances are the

5 same.

ABSTRACT:

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A disc drive apparatus (1) capable of reading/writing discs (100; 200) of different sizes comprises:

a first rotary drive device (30) for holding and rotating a first type disc (100) in a first play position; and

5 scanning means (40) for scanning a surface (103) of the rotating first type disc (100) in its play position.

The disc drive apparatus (1) further comprises a second rotary drive device (50), arranged opposite the scanning means (40), for holding and rotating a second type disc (200) in a second play position. Said scanning means (40) are also capable of scanning a
10 surface (203) of the rotating second type disc (200) in its play position.

Figures 3A-C

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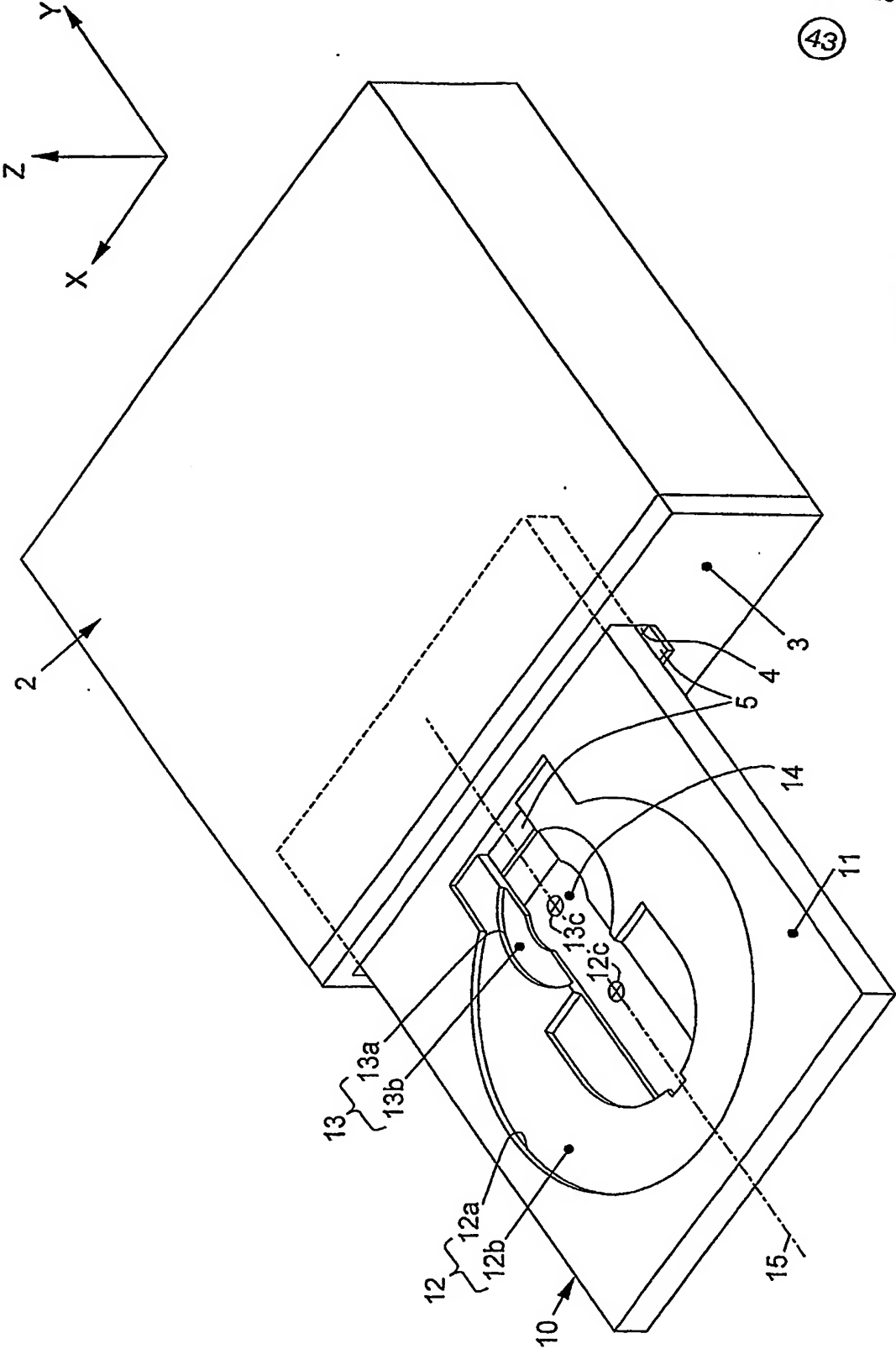


FIG. 1

